

A Commendable Educational Experience

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TWENTY-FIVE years of striving to improving nursing education in Andhra Pradesh will be celebrated in October when Hyderabad College of Nursing, affiliated with Osmania University, attains its Silver Jubilee. The problems, challenges, and hopes of the Nursing profession can be illustrated in the story of baccalaureate Nursing education in Hyderabad.

Baccalaureate Education in Hyderabad

The College of Nursing was developed at the request of Medical and Nursing personnel of Andhra Pradesh State. The main objective of the College was to prepare young students of ability for pioneer work in developing and improving the Nursing services in the State of Andhra Pradesh. At the time of its inauguration in July, 1959, the College was the only state-operated Nursing College in India.

Reactions of the Nursing, Medical and University communities of the day varied. Nurses felt threatened, reflects Miss T.H.A. Khan, who has been Principal of the College since its beginning. They felt that the university graduates would occupy the higher positions, and that certificate nurses would therefore not have opportunities to progress. To promote co-operation and understanding, a curriculum committee was formed, consisting of the Nursing Superintendents of all the hospitals in the City. The com-

This article on the Hyderabad College of Nursing has been specially written by Ms. M. Dawn Faris of the University of British Columbia, Canada, on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee this month.



mittee members advise the College faculty regarding the preparation of the university nurses. This has succeeded in reducing the threat to some degree, and the demonstration by the graduates of the College that they can apply their theoretical training by functioning well on the wards has also helped to alleviate some of the original criticism.

Another help in improving relations with certificate nurses has been the addition of the two-year Condensed Course. This course is unique among post-certificate programmes for nurses in India because the students must meet the same examinations as the four-year students. Since the Condensed Course was started in 1966, the attitude of certificate nurses toward baccalaureate nurses has improved considerably.

"The medical profession was very much in favour," states Miss Khan. "They wanted the type of a

nurse that would be like a partner with them. The Director of Medical Services called me, and he said he wanted us to prepare a nurse who could be a team member, who would stand by the side of the doctor, look at his face and speak up." This University community was very happy about the new programme and readily gave the full support of its faculty and facilities.

Development of the Curriculum

The curriculum has been carefully organised to provide maximum integration of theory and practice. A difficult task for the College from the time of its inception was development of adequate Clinical and Public Health Nursing fields for student practice. Several teaching hospitals are utilised, and the College has developed its own urban and rural Public Health Nursing fields where Domiciliary Midwifery is included in the stu-

dents' experience. During their rural practice, the students spend six weeks at the College's rural hostel and conduct their practice under a team of Public Health nurses appointed by the College.

Originally, it was felt that the baccalaureate nurses would have a major role to play in preventive health care, particularly in Community Nursing. Miss Khan's own post-graduate speciality in Community Health Nursing has had a strong influence on the curriculum from the beginning. The emergence of other categories of workers in the field, plus the reluctance of the nurses to work in "on-call" positions in isolated villages, has resulted in a change of emphasis over the years. Some of the graduates work as Extension Educators and Public Health Nursing Supervisors, but the majority take up posts in Nursing Education and in Clinical Nursing speciality areas. The programme has been changed to reflect this trend, but prevention and health teaching are still stressed.

Since its inauguration the College has graduated 337 four-year students, and 63 Condensed Course students. Admission enrolment has increased from the original 15 seats to the present level of 48. Admission requirements for both courses are the same: ten-plus-two with a science background in college. All of the four-year students receive a stipend and all of the two-year students are deputed on full salary.

The faculty at present numbers 23. All of the faculty are required to have Master's degrees, except the Public Health Nurses who work in the field. In 1983 admission to baccalaureate programmes in Andhra Pradesh became regionalised, so new B.Sc (N) programmes have been started, at Kurnool and Visakhapatnam. Association between the Nursing Colleges is close because the teachers at the new Colleges are almost all graduates of Hyderabad College of Nursing and the Principal of Hyderabad College of Nursing sits on the Board of Studies of the other two Colleges.

Achievements, Problems and Challenges

In June, 1984, the College of Nursing was granted permission and funds to begin an M.Sc(N) programme. Three additional faculty members plus supporting clerical staff have been sanctioned. Besides providing an opportunity for more nurses in Andhra Pradesh to receive advanced preparation, the new programme is expected to upgrade the teaching standards at the baccalaureate level because new highly qualified faculty will no doubt provide stimulation and expertise. The Master's programme will focus on preparation of clinical nurse specialists, and its graduates are expected to provide leadership in bedside Nursing care, administrative, and teaching positions.

The College of Nursing graduates are often frustrated after they are posted due to lack of opportunity to practise what they have been taught. They face lack of basic equipment, too-heavy patient assignment, irrelevant clerical duties, and the indifference of hospital or clinic staff. They have been taught to assert themselves when appropriate, but until more senior personnel in the Nursing care system have received advanced preparation, many of the principles they have been taught will remain distant ideals. The resulting job stress has driven perhaps 50% of the graduates either away from the profession or into Nursing positions abroad, where they are able to receive more satisfaction from their work.

What has been achieved? "Now the very fact that in the hospitals our graduates are being put in the most difficult situations, like ICU and Recovery Room, shows confidence in the ability of these nurses to give good Nursing care and accept responsibility," says Miss Khan. She feels that in the face of other trends among health care workers which are concentrating more on the needs of the worker and less on the needs of the patient, the College graduates will have an increased need to assert themselves in asking for the opportunity to provide the best possible Nursing care. They will

need to give leadership in the profession, based on their philosophy that they should be promoting better Nursing care rather than demanding certain working conditions for nurses.

Faculty members feel that while much has been achieved, there are many problems in allowing the graduates to reach their full potential. Over the years the unique preparation of the B.Sc nurse has come to be recognised and appreciated. The teachers express satisfaction that many of the graduates are actually practising bedside nursing care, but they echo Miss Khan's concern about the conflict the nurses feel in trying to apply their ideals to their work situations. The teachers feel that once some M.Sc graduates are appointed as Nursing administrators, it may be possible to promote some improvement in the hospitals.

Students commend the quality of the education they are receiving, but regret that their clinical experience cannot provide the opportunity to observe and practise certain of the theoretical material and skills they are learning. The students recognise that one of the strengths of their programme is the importance placed upon personal development, social responsibility, and leadership skills.

The challenges are great but there is an air of determination, a feeling that the cause is worthwhile, and that the goal of excellence in patient care will not be compromised. The hope is that with time more voices will be heard, that patients and the public will demand better care, and that the authorities will provide adequate facilities and numbers of Nursing staff.

These feelings about Nursing are no doubt reflected throughout India and indeed throughout the world. It is for this reason that we should salute Hyderabad College of Nursing on its Silver Jubilee, offering congratulations on achieving 25 years of promoting excellence in Nursing education and Nursing care, and urging perseverance and visionary thinking in meeting the challenges of the future.